

**Statement of Rep. Edward Markey  
Upon the Introduction of the  
Morris K. Udall Arctic Wilderness Act of 2003  
February 13, 2003**

It's my pleasure to be here today with Rep. Johnson and the other Members of Congress, Gene Karpinski on behalf of the environmental community and Sarah James representing the Gwich'in people. Sarah, as far as I'm concerned, you are the sweetheart of the Arctic Refuge.

We are here to introduce legislation that would permanently protect the Coastal Plain of the Arctic Refuge from development. The Morris K. Udall Wilderness Act of 2003 honors an extraordinary environmentalist by protecting, in his name, this extraordinary piece of America's wilderness. And we are proud of the fact that begin this battle in the 108<sup>th</sup> Congress with more original cosponsors than in any other previous Congress -- 129 as of this morning -- a testament to the growing national demand to keep the developers out of this precious wilderness and to preserve it in its current pristine, roadless condition for future generations of Americans.

We have a bipartisan legacy to protect, and we take it very seriously. It is a legacy of Republican President Eisenhower, who set aside the core of the Refuge in 1960. It is a legacy of Democratic President Carter, who expanded it in 1980. It is the legacy of Republican Senator Bill Roth and Democratic Representative Bruce Vento and especially Morris Udall, who fought so hard to achieve what we propose today, and twice succeeded in shepherding this wilderness proposal through the House. Now is the time to finish the job they began now is the time to say "Yes" to setting aside the Coastal Plain as a fully protected unit of the Wilderness Preservation System.

The coastal plain of the Refuge is the biological heart of the Refuge ecosystem and critical to the survival of caribou, polar bears and over 160 species of birds. When you drill in the heart, every other part of the biological system suffers.

This Valentine's Day, the oil industry is in a state of lobbying frenzy to give Cupid a bad name. It wants to pierce the heart of the Arctic Refuge with oil wells and drill bits, all the while calling this an act of environmental friendliness. The industry loves the Refuge so much that it wants to brand it with scars for a lifetime.

Turning the Coastal Plain of the Arctic Refuge into an industrial footprint would not only be bad environmental policy, it is totally unnecessary. According to EPA scientists, if cars, mini-vans, and SUV's improved their average fuel economy just 3 miles per gallon, we would save more oil within ten years than would ever be produced from the Refuge. Can we do that? We already did it once! In 1987, the fleetwide average fuel economy topped 26 miles per gallon, but in the last 13 years, we have slipped back to 24 mpg on average, a level we first reached in 1981! Simply using existing technology will allow us to dramatically increase fuel economy, not just by 3 mpg, but by 15 mpg or more -- five times the amount the industry wants to drill out of the Refuge.

Our dependence on foreign oil is real, but we cannot escape it by drilling for oil in the United States. We consume 25 percent of the world's oil but control only 3 percent of the world's reserves. 76 percent of those reserves are in OPEC, so we will continue to look to foreign

suppliers as long as we continue to ignore the fuel economy of our cars and as long as we continue to fuel them with gasoline.

The public senses that a drill-in-the-Refuge energy strategy is a loser. Why sacrifice something that can never be re-created this one-of-a-kind wilderness simply to avoid something relatively painless -- sensible fuel economy?

Is it any wonder its credibility with the American public has sunk to new lows? According to poll after poll after poll, preserving this public environmental treasure far outweighs the value of developing it. The latest poll, done by Democratic pollster Celinda Lake and Republican pollster Christine Matthews, shows a margin of 62-30 percent opposed to drilling for oil in the refuge. The public is making clear to Congress that other options should be pursued, not just because the Refuge is so special, but because the other options will succeed where continuing to put a polluting fuel in gas-guzzling automobiles is a recipe for failure.

That's the kind of thinking that leads not just to this refuge, but to every other pristine wilderness area, in a desperate search for yet another drop of oil. And it perpetuates a head-in-the-haze attitude towards polluting our atmosphere with greenhouse gases and continuing our reliance on OPEC oil for the foreseeable future.

If we allow drilling in the Arctic Refuge, we will have failed twice -- we will remain just as dependent on oil for our energy future, and we will have hastened the demise of an irreplaceable wildlife habitat.

We have many choices to make regarding our energy future, but we have very few choices when it comes to industrial pressures on incomparable natural wonders. Let us be clear with the American people that there are places that are so special for their environmental, wilderness or recreational value that we simply will not drill there as long as alternatives exist. The Arctic Refuge is federal land that was set aside for all the people of the United States. It does not belong to the oil companies, it does not belong to one state. It is a public wilderness treasure, we are the trustees.

We do not dam Yosemite Valley for hydropower.

We do not strip mine Yellowstone for coal.

And we should not drill for oil and gas in the Arctic Refuge.

We should preserve it, instead, as the magnificent wilderness it has always been, and must always be.

Thank you.